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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: GON CALLS FOR DELAY OF ZIMBABWE POLL

¶1. After resolutions by both the Senate and the House of Representatives urging the Nigerian government to intervene in the Zimbabwe crisis, the GON publicly called for the postponement of Zimbabwe's presidential run-off. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement late on June 26 which said that "Nigeria joins the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and well-meaning friends of Zimbabwe in calling for a postponement of the election. In the present circumstances, it is doubtful if a credible run-off election can be held in Zimbabwe." The MFA statement also "calls on the government of Zimbabwe to take up the offer of fresh negotiations with a view to restoring normalcy and a congenial atmosphere for free and fair elections in the country."

¶2. According to press accounts, Nigeria's Senate adopted a motion June 25 which called on President Yar'Adua to "join the African Union and United Nations in encouraging President Mugabe to step down." The Senators also asked President Yar'Adua to "appeal for the people's choice to be respected" and to ask the GOZ to "stop political violence, harassment, and intimidation." On June 26, the House of Representatives also took up the issue of Zimbabwe's election. The House resolved to "urge the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to leverage the leadership position of Nigeria and its inherent goodwill to mid-wife an immediate cessation of hostilities between supporters of the ruling party and those of the opposing parties in order to halt (Zimbabwe's) imminent decline into anarchy." The resolution also called on the Nigerian President to meet with other leaders of the African Union to try to bring together the Zimbabwean government and opposition to agree upon "a mutually beneficial political agreement until proper elections can be held under the close scrutiny of international observers."

¶3. Nigerian Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe also told Ambassador just before his departure to the U.S. on July 19 that he had been in contact with the Zimbabwean Foreign Minister at the behest of President Yar'Adua to encourage a more transparent process.

¶4. Comment: Post will follow up with MFA and National Assembly contacts to obtain full texts of the House, Senate, and MFA statements on Zimbabwe and forward them via email to AF/W and AF/S. It is unusual for the GON to speak out so publicly and harshly on domestic politics of another African nation, especially one outside the West African region, although they do so in private. The GON statements, though only one day ahead of the June 27 run-off poll, are better late than never and may bode well for African Union

initiatives on Zimbabwe next week at the Summit in Sharm
El-Sheikh. End Comment.
SANDERS